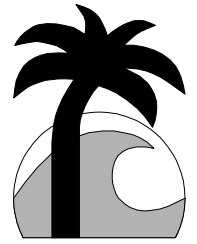


Island Parks Insider



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In This Issue

In addition to our regular reports from the president, park manager, volunteer coordinator, training coordinator and membership chairman, this month Park Biologist **Sally Braem** gives us her insights on the natural world of Honeymoon Island, Park Manager **Pete Krulder** reviews park management topics. New in this issue is the Rotary Centennial Nature Center Newsletter insert featuring a contribution from Nature Center Volunteer **Jerry Allen** entitled "Osprey Overhead"

President's Message

*By George Skalkeas
President, Friends of the Island Parks*

Dear friends, we are at the midpoint of another big year in our short but exciting history. The Rotary Centennial Nature Center is open and running and the development of our tour program is off to a great start as well. Hats off to **Pete Krulder** and his staff and especially to **Tim Marshall** and our **Volunteers** for establishing a first class operation from day one.

While the primary goals for 2007 continue to be on the successful launch and operation of the Nature Center, we recognize that the organization needs to look beyond this single endeavor. Accordingly we are giving stronger focus to issues such as strategic planning, membership, relationships with other local community organizations, and non-event based fund raising. Allow me to say a bit more about each of these.

A Strategic Planning Committee, headed up by board member **Marianne Davis** and including both board and general members, is looking to better articulate our mission and long range goals and, more importantly, to develop and implement action plans

for the accomplishment of these goals. The group is looking at the park manager's goals and assesses the best ways the Friends can help to get these things done. There will be opportunities for your input so watch for announcements. In the meantime, if you are interested in getting directly involved, don't hesitate to contact either Marianne or myself.

Ray Dabkowski, another board member as well as our membership secretary, is heading up another group of other board and general members who have been developing ways to make Friend's membership more enjoyable and worthwhile. The group is focusing on attracting new members and retaining those we have. Look for more "perks" like our Sirius Satellite Radio give-away and special "member appreciation" type meetings such as our July meeting.

To supplement the funds we raise through the production of events such as Earth Day and Halloween extravaganzas, we have established the "Friends' Memorial Bench Program". This is a group of board and general members, headed up by our VP **Scott Hood**, who have taken on the task of managing the solicitation, construction, placement, maintenance and paperwork associated with the popular benches and swings you see throughout Honeymoon and Caladesi islands. In addition to being a significant fund raiser, this program can significantly relieve the staffing costs to the parks associated with these structures.

And as if this were not enough, we have accepted an invitation from the Dunedin Kiwanis Club, Dunedin Boat Club and the City of Dunedin to take an active role in the upcoming Kiwanis/Dunedin Boat Club Annual Dunedin Cup/ Regatta. This will be held in September at Edgewater Park. It is a way for us to support other organizations that support us and it provides a tremendous opportunity for us to show and tell folks who we are and what we do.

Park Manager's Report

by *Pete Krulder*
Park Manager

It has been several months since I last sat down and wrote my Managers Message and there have been many notable achievements since that time. During the Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in the spring members of our CSO and Park Volunteers walked away with nearly half of the awards given out in District Four. At the Park Managers Meeting in May we also received the Divisions Team Project Award for the Nature Center. Our President was there along with several staff members and volunteers to receive this award.

Our Earth day event was a huge success. With this years theme being more focused on the environment and the venue changed to the picnic area instead of a big parking lot it was more in keeping with what the mission of this organization is about, supporting and protecting these beautiful jewels we have been blessed to have. My compliments to Barry Metcalfe and his entire committee for such a wonderful event and my thanks to all the volunteers and staff that made the event what it was.

In the last few days I have been taking the time to close out the last of the paperwork concerning the Nature Center and it has given me time to reflect on what a tremendous project this has been. From its start as a goal of a very new CSO, to the Grand Opening in May of 2007, to the response it has received from our park visitors, it is a testament to what a group of like minded people can accomplish.

Although the project took nearly four years to accomplish, the members of this organization and our many partners stuck to it and on May the 10th when we finally opened the doors everyone could see that it was worth the journey.

I would like to thank everyone that helped make the Grand Opening a success. We had over 200 guests in attendance. The weather was beautiful and being able to showcase the Nature Center was the highlight of the day. Since the opening we have had over 4,000 visitors and I have received many compliments on how the facility looks and how friendly and helpful the staff is.

We are in the process of finishing up our fiscal year and the numbers are in. Honeymoon Island State

Park was the most visited State Park in the state with 976,553 visitors. Caladesi Island State Park had 294,547 visitors this year and will also be in the top of the attendance figures for the Florida Park Service. For those of you who have not heard, Caladesi Island State Park has once again been named the second best beach in the United States, by Dr. Beach.

We are now in the middle of the dog days of summer and with the heat the beach is as busy as can be. If you come out to the park try and visit early in the day or get out to see a beautiful sunset and not have to fight the heat.

Friends CSO News

2007 Board and Officers

Under the Friends by-laws, directors serve staggered two-year terms and there is no limit to the number of terms directors may serve. The following *Friends* members begin the second year of their two-year terms in January 2007: **Ron Geisheimer, Diane Scott, Marianne Davis, Skip Meadows, Barry Metcalfe** and **Ray Dabkowski**. They are joined by "holdovers" **Jacques Rene Marion, George Skalkeas, Gabriella Mullins, Shane Bittaker, Scott Hood, Linda Taylor** and **Mike Moran** who are beginning *new* two-year terms. In addition, **Wayne Case** began a two-year term in 2007 as a new director.

From this group an *Executive Committee* is formed and for 2007 it is comprised of **George Skalkeas**, president; **Scott Hood**, vice president; **Barry Metcalfe**, treasurer; and **Ron Geisheimer**, secretary. From time to time the board creates sub-committees, and for 2007 there is a membership sub-committee chaired by **Ray Dabkowski** who is joined by **Ron Geisheimer** and **Diane Hood**; and the new Nature Center sub-committee which includes **Gloria Beauchamp, Skip Meadows** and **Tim Marshall**. Please feel free to contact any of these folks about any Friends issue. There is more detailed contact information on the last page.

Special Thanks

Thanks to **Steve Osburg** from **Totally Board** in Clearwater for donating a long board to Honeymoon Island. This board will be used to increase safety in the park, especially by our lifeguards that will be able to use it for rescues on the beach. Submitted by Ashley Douthirt, OPS

Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island State Park News

The Rotary Centennial Nature Center's grand opening was held on May 10, 2007. Since that time, we have greeted more than 5000 visitors. Locals who frequent the islands as well as visitors from all over the world have given lots of positive feedback, and have enjoyed our exhibits, our great view from the deck, and our new nature center trail.

Extra Extra! – Read all about us!

Area television stations have featured personal staff interviews and video productions featuring the park and its new nature center. Newspaper journalists have been eager to feature the nature center prominently, with full coverage on their websites as well. This has stirred interest and helped to get the word out to the community and beyond.

Come join in on the fun activities!

On Saturdays and Sundays we feature bird observation from the deck, which is especially rewarding at low tide. Local tides for St. Joseph Sound are viewable at www.dunedinweather.com. Volunteers **Ray Dabkowski** and **Ellen Pfau** have exercised their skills with helping visitors in identifying the many shorebirds, wading birds and diving birds that frequent the tidal flats and oyster beds visible from the deck. A spotting scope donated by the Clearwater Audubon Society, and high quality marine binoculars provide clear close-up views. Families with children and school groups have been busy with the scavenger hunt which challenges participants to find 20 different items in the exhibit area. Volunteers offer well received impromptu guided walks on the short nature center trail.

Nature Observations

Wildlife observed at the center includes several individual Gopher Tortoises, Raccoon, Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnakes, Coachwhip Snakes, Nurse Sharks, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Roseate Spoonbills and dozens of other bird species. The summer rains have brought with them several showy wildflowers and interesting native plants. There is now fruit on the Prickly Pear Cactus, Sea Grapes, Privet Bushes and Sabal Palms. Delicate lavender colored Seaside Gentian, white Heliotrope, bright yellow Coreopsis, Mangrove blossoms and other seasonal bloomers such as Capeweed, Spanish Needles and Lantana are attracting butterflies. These include the Gulf Fritillary, Barred Yellow Sulphur, Red Admiral, Common Buckeye, and White Peacock butterflies.

Nature Center Committee News

The Friends of the Island Parks Nature Center Committee has been meeting monthly to address the Friends continued involvement with the center. Below are a few of the items being addressed.

- The Committee is developing strategies for a small retail operation at the center
- Currently addressing facility issues such as furnishing seating for the deck, lowering the deck rail for optimal viewing and better accessibility.
- Development of our wonderful tour program.

The nature center and park interpretive staff has already welcomed various groups for special nature center visits, programs and tours, including St. Pete College, the Red Hats, The Clearwater Visitors Bureau, Crystal Beach Youth Camp, Junior Lifeguards, and Primary Prep School.

A recommendation is being made by the nature center committee to develop a half-day professionally guided tour to the Caladesi homestead, which would provide participants with a light day pack, compact binoculars, a field guide, water and even a boxed trailside lunch. The hike would feature an overview of barrier islands, and introduction to some of the natural communities and plants and animals on the island, as well as a personal interpretation of the cultural history, with a focus on the Scharrer family homestead including a special visit with a personality from the island's past. Look for these developments just in time for the cooler weather this fall.

Nature Center Volunteer Training

For those interested in Volunteering at the center, we have another training class scheduled to begin Saturday, October 6, 2007. Those wishing to work inside the center greeting visitors will be given a volunteer orientation, public relations training, park familiarization tour at Caladesi, and a hands on nature center operations tour. They will then be scheduled to work alongside a senior volunteer for mentoring. Those wishing to conduct programs and activities such as walks and workshops for the public will be given the above training as well as additional training on Nature Interpretation concepts and practices and will learn about the island's history and ecology.

Details and sign up information can be found at: <http://www.islandparks.org/naturecenter/main.htm>

Reasons for Anclote exotics eradication

by Sally Braem, Park Biologist

Australian pine and Brazilian pepper are the most common exotics observed on Anclote Key Preserve State Park. It is believed that the pine came in during the early part of last century possibly for shade and wind protection near the inhabited area of the light house. The trees colonize nutrient poor soil because they are able to fix nitrogen. The seeds sprout in the high tide wrack lines; the rows of trees indicate the high water levels over the years as the island accretes. Brazilian pepper likely was in Florida at the turn of the last century, planted as an attractive hedge, with shiny red berries, often referred to as Florida holly.

In many areas, the Australian pine and Brazilian pepper have displaced what had been a coastal strand and could recover to a coastal strand, one of the rarer community types on the coast. (Due to development of nearly all barrier islands on the west peninsular coast of Florida, coastal strand is scarce.) Coastal hammock and coastal grasslands are equally affected by the infestation of these plants. Dense stands of Australian pine reduce biodiversity by shading the soil, altering light, temperature, and soil chemistry creating an ecologically sterile place.

Brazilian pepper displaces mangroves and other coastal adapted vegetation, such as sea grape, necklace pod, beach creeper, cocoplum, among others. The abundant seeds produced by the female plants and the vegetative propagation abilities enable it to out-compete the natives. The resin in all parts of the plant produces allergic reactions in many people similar to that caused by its relative, poison ivy.

Habitat utilized by insects and other native wildlife is destroyed by both species. Very few songbirds will nest or eat from Australian pine. Shallow root systems of Australian pine cause erosion along shorelines. The root systems do not trap sand, therefore allowing beach erosion. The trees take over prime nesting areas used by sea turtles and the roots trap and cause the death of turtles attempting to nest.

Historically, the island had a very different vegetation type with a more open aspect with the ability of the sea breeze to pass through. Park visitors complain about the no-see-ums and mosquitoes in the thick stands of pine. Florida state parks are managed as natural systems to appear as they would have had they not been altered by people. All plant and animal life and cultural resources are protected.

The Osprey - Pandion Haliaeetus Carolinsis

By Jerry Allen, Nature Center Volunteer

The North American Osprey's scientific name *Pandion haliaetus carolinis* loosely translated means "broken bone sea eagle". It was given to the Osprey by a British taxonomist named Lesson in the year 1928. Problems stemming from the literal translation of the Greek word *pandion* led to the Osprey being classified in the falcon and hawk family. Taxonomists today remain divided on its classification. The Osprey is the only bird in the *Pandionidae* family, setting it apart from other birds of prey as a very distinct species.

A Greek myth relating to the classification "Pandion" is as follows. There were two married sisters that were involved in intra-family intrigue, and as a result, one was changed into a Swallow, and the other into a Nightingale, and they both were to be forevermore chased by a Hawk owned by one of the husbands.

So if you ever see a Hawk chasing a Swallow on Honeymoon Island, you will know the reason why! The question arises as to why the sisters were changed into birds and not the husbands. Could it be because in those days women did not have many rights and women's "lib" was non-existent? There are Swallows on Honeymoon Island, that is if they are not returning to Capistrano - however there are no Nightingales. Could it be the Nightingales are all singing on Barkley Square? There are many songs with bird's names. Jan Peerce sang a beautiful song entitled "The Bluebird of Happiness". And there is "When the Red Red Robin Comes Bob Bob Bobbing Along". Can you think of others?

A further study has placed the Osprey in the Hawk classification. The matter is still being studied. The final consensus is likely that the Osprey should have a classification all its own due to its singular feeding and migratory habits.

The Osprey's diet consists of mostly fish. They have been occasionally seen carrying carrion, rodents, small birds, turtles, frogs and crustaceans. Whether this is intended for consumption, or for adding to the nest, as many unusual items are found built into Osprey nests, is up to interpretation. While whether they eat these other things is a matter of debate, it is known that Ospreys readily scavenge bird and animal carcasses for using as nesting material, and it is also agreed that fresh caught fish comprises 98% or more of their diet. In regard to the Osprey's unique migration habits, well, that's another lesson.

Volunteer News

By Karen Malo, Park Services Specialist

We have many wonderful volunteers and all deserve recognition. Each month we will highlight a volunteer who deserves recognition for their dedication to helping our parks and will post it in our information kiosk as you drive into the park.



Joni Smith is truly a volunteer with Heart (or should I say hearts?) Joni has been a volunteer since 2005. Shortly after attending volunteer orientation and training, Joni discovered that she would need to get a heart transplant. As soon as she was able, Joni came back to the park to volunteer while waiting to hear about her heart transplant. Joni could be found in the toll booth assisting with phone calls, passes and answering visitor's questions, doing Marine Debris Surveys and sometimes even mending ranger's uniforms. One thing about Joni that is apparent as soon as you meet her is her positive attitude and sense of humor. Despite Joni's health issues, she is one of the most upbeat people you will ever meet! She is always willing to help out in the toll booth in any way that she can. If things are busy she can handle it and if it is a slow day she keeps the toll collectors company or finds another way to help out whether stocking up on copies or answering questions from visitors. It is apparent that Joni truly enjoys being in the park!

This past January, I received an email from Joni saying that she was on her way to the hospital to get her new heart! I was both excited and nervous for Joni and was surprised that the day after her transplant, the nurses transferred my phone call to Joni's room and I was able to speak with her. The voice on the phone was the same Joni but with a new heart and a new lease on life. She was even joking and laughing as usual. It took several months of recovery and Joni returned to her volunteer job in the toll booth in May.

Joni told me that just knowing she had a place to come back to where she was needed really helped her in her recovery. Joni is a true inspiration and we are very lucky to have her as a dedicated volunteer.

If you see Joni in the toll booth please say hello and congratulate her on being our volunteer of the month! Look for more volunteer spotlights because you never know if it could be you or someone you know!

Membership News

by Ray Dabkowski, Membership Secretary

The Friends membership is growing and we now have over 130 active members. We would like to warmly welcome the following new members:

Gloria Arlington, Clearwater
Terri Weaver, Dunedin
John & Rebecca Hallstrom, Palm Harbor
Toni Wise, Dunedin
Allen Turza, Dunedin
Teddy & Dave Buell, Clearwater
Sharon Frazer Conte, Dunedin
Nancy McClelland, Safety Harbor
Shannon Ratigan, Dunedin
Jean & John Shelling, Clearwater
Cynthia Hawthorne, Crystal Beach
Rick & Christine Lawrence, Pensacola
Katherine Ozack, Dunedin
Gayle & Henry Pinkowski, Dunedin
Jean Sibbald, Clearwater
Marlene Szabo, Tampa

More Friends means more fun! If you missed our Wine and Cheese Party on July 24th, don't fret! We have some wonderful member events coming up soon including a breakfast at Café Honeymoon with a kayak demonstration, a chocolate buffet, and our Annual Christmas Party. Of course, we will continue with the informative programs presented at monthly meetings. We have some other surprises in the works. Don't forget to check the Web site for the latest news and member updates. Stay tuned!

Remember, benefits include voting rights, and a quarterly newsletter. The new membership cards now being distributed allow free admission to Honeymoon and Caladesi Islands on **one day of your choice** each month. Refer a friend! Membership applications are available at www.islandparks.org the toll booth, Nature Center and at the ranger station on Caladesi Island.

Friends of the Island Parks Calendar

All meetings are now held at Honeymoon Nature Center.

Jul	17	6:30 pm	Board Meeting
Jul	24	7:00 pm	Membership Meeting
Aug	21	6:30 pm	Board Meeting
Aug	28	7:00 pm	Membership Meeting
Sep	18	6:30 pm	Board Meeting
Sep	25	7:00 pm	Membership Meeting

Island Amenities

Be sure to visit *Cafe Honeymoon* and *Cafe Caladesi* when on the islands for food, gifts and beach supplies. Try out the **pancake breakfasts** on Sunday at *Cafe Honeymoon*. In addition, check with them about special occasions on the islands.

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For More Information Contact: Shane Bittaker
727•736•2132
1 Causeway Blvd.
Dunedin, FL

Friends Board and Member Meetings

The Board of Directors meets at 6:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month for approximately 1 ½ hours. The general membership meeting is on the fourth Tuesday of the month and begins at 7:00 p.m. and usually features a presentation of local interest. Unless otherwise posted, both meetings are held at the *Rotary Centennial Nature Center at Honeymoon Island*. You are welcome to attend the board meeting and highly encouraged to come to the membership meetings!



Friends of the Island Parks

Members of the Board

Executive Committee

President: George Skalkeas
Vice President: Scott Hood
Treasurer: Barry Metcalfe
Secretary: Ron Geisheimer

Directors: Shane Bittaker Mike Moran

Wayne Case Linda Taylor
Dave Cesare Gabriella Mullins
Diane Hood Marianne Davis
Skip Meadows Pat Linn
Barry Metcalfe Ray Dabkowski

Contact Us

Gulf Island State Parks

Honeymoon Island: 727-469-5942
Caladesi Island: 727-469-5918
Volunteers:
Karen Malo
karen.malo@dep.state.fl.us
727-638-2334

Friends of the Island Parks

President:
George Skalkeas
gs72hotrod@tampabay.rr.com
727-733-5188

Membership:
Ray Dabkowski
rayd@en.com
727-415-1615

Nature Center / Newsletter / Website:
Tim Marshall
info@islandparks.org
727-733-5188

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